

"I have been proud of the fact that my home town preserved something that the whole state can be thankful for and enjoy: The Wolf Road Prairie. It is a rare jewel in a fast disappearing world of natural areas."

Constance Scanlon, Suburban Life Citizen, 1989

Natural Areas of Cook County

Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve

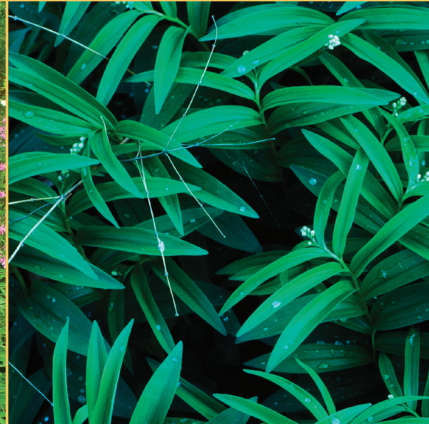




The early landscape of Cook County consisted of wet prairies interspersed with isolated prairie groves. Wolf Road Prairie, with its wet prairie adjacent to a mature oak savanna, is one of the best examples of presettlement Cook County. Here you can experience the illusion of emerging from the woods and discovering the prairie for the first time, much like the early settlers did, only with the convenience of a sidewalk.

Due to the area's wet nature, it was never plowed or grazed. In the 1920s, Wolf Road was destined to become a housing development and sidewalks were constructed. But when the Great Depression intervened, the owner was forced to abandon the project, and the prairie was spared—one of the few good things to have come from the depression.

By the 1970s, local conservationists discovered Wolf Road. This led to the formation of the Save the Prairie Society,





which has had an active role in the management, restoration, and preservation of the area. In 1988, the area was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

When you visit, don't forget your plant field guide as over 350 species of forbs grow here. During spring, look for shooting star, phlox, Indian paintbrush, spiderwort and perhaps one of the state's best displays of wild hyacinth and wild geranium. By summer, the yellows of composites will be in their full glory, along with rattlesnake master and blazing star. Franzosenbusch Prairie House, an 1850s farmhouse, is considered the oldest structure in Westchester. Situated at the north end of the original prairie, it is being restored as a nature center and a museum and serves as a gateway to the preserve. In the fall, from the farmhouse deck you can view 80 acres of "wild" prairie aglow with sunflowers, goldenrod, and monarchs, providing a brief glimpse into the past before the advent of urban sprawl.



Directions

Take the US 34 (Ogden Ave.) exit off I-294 (Tri-state Tollway) and go 0.75 of a mile on Ogden Ave. to Wolf Rd. Take Wolf Rd. north 1 mile to 31st St. in Westchester.

The preserve is north of 31st St. and west of Wolf Rd.

GPS: N 41.834°, W -87.902° All photos by INHS staff.



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